

# Editing

**Editor's Job:** aesthetic choices and technical skill

- often cut films while still shooting, editor can make rough cut of scene.
- editor should be in tune with intentions of the director
- must tell story clearly
- editor screens every bit of footage.
- consider actor's performances, i.e. who is carrying scene, who to emphasize, shots to use.
- aware of contributions of cinematographer, actors, production designer
- editor manipulates time, slows or cuts it down
- creates time shift using flashbacks and flashforward
- use an objective eye
- with script, makes loose continuity cut to see how narrative works in rough form

## Selection

- eliminate unusable footage: bad takes, duplicated actions, poorly acted CUs, technical problems.
- content should graphically reveal script's desired action
- photographic quality: composition, exposure, focus, etc.
- continuity
- best sound, if lip synched

**Coverage:** it is the director's responsibility to give the editor enough good film footage for options

- may have to choose between good content and quality of shot, ie light, sound, etc.
- insurance is toward heavy coverage
- heavy coverage can be a burden by providing too many choices. More is not necessarily better.

## Tempo, Rhythm and Pacing

General rule: the longer the shot = more relaxed, shorter the shot = more exciting.

Length of shots varies throughout a film.

Action films: fast pace. Suspense: longer shots gradually shorten to accelerate tempo.

An exaggerated long take can create tension and suspense.

## Continuity Editing

Provide a logical flow and emphasize the apparent realism and naturalness of the story.

Minimize the presence of film technique.

Attempt to make the cut from one shot to the next flow as smoothly & unobtrusively as possible

- arrange shots to tell a story coherently and clearly
- to allow space, time and action to continue in a smooth flow over a series of shots
- breaks in continuity can confuse and meaning loses credibility.

In typical Hollywood film, the story unfolds scene by scene, generally in chronological order.

Often skip over events that are not needed.

- traditional: LS, MS, CU, LS
- motivation: change of scene, if someone looks at something - show it.

**The 180 degree rule** – maintaining a constant screen direction by the camera staying on the same side of the line of action.

**Eyeline Match:** two characters appear to be looking at each other from one shot to the next. The spaces they both inhabit are connected and often established in a wide or master shot.

Hidden Editing or Invisible Editing: mask the cuts, make them less apparent.

To hold continuity:

- **Overlapping action:** the action in 1 shot is repeated, in part, in following shot.
- **Match cut:** characters movement & position is perfectly aligned in both time & space from one shot to next, whether CU or LS

## Time

**Cinematic Time:** keep on a shot only long enough to reveal character, to develop the plot or make a dramatic point. Show what is significant.

- Ellipsis: periods of time are left out of the narrative, cuts down an action, omits unnecessary footage

**Emotional Time:** may be lengthened for effect

- Freeze Frame: hold on a single frame, suspends a moving image in a timeless moment
- Slow motion: can make a moment more dramatic
- Overlapping editing: action from the end of one shot is repeated in the next

**Real time:** visual record filmed in entirety, most often used with powerful conversations

- Double action: part of the action is repeated in successive shots

## Cutting on Movement

- editor creates one movement comprised of many individual shots.
- when cutting during rapid action, delete or overlap movement
- cut from larger scene to smaller, delete frames of movement at head second scene
- when cut from small to large: overlap tail action
- for an important visual action, cut to most graphic viewpoint before action occurs.
- if action significant, play entire dramatic action in full w/o cutting.
- after each action, cut to a reaction.

## Cutting as a thematic statement

Usually juxtaposing seemingly disconnected, and perhaps dissimilar, images to achieve deeper insight in the meaning of the film.

## Transitions

**Straight Cut:** instantaneous change from one shot to the next, as one would see

**Dissolve:** one image fades out, another fades in through it, rate is important - traditionally passage of time

**Jump Cut:** cut to similar picture, angle, frame, sudden displacement of subjects, can give more energy and/or confuse

- cutting from two very similar shots and/or angles, too similar
- continuous action with center of film frames cut out
- switch from 1 time period, action or place to another, using same cam angle

**Fade In/Fade Out:** from black to image, from image to black

- different rates, most often to indicate passage of time

**Wipes:** horizontal, vertical, iris (circle) in or out.

- Most often associated with silent, early film eras. More noticeable.

## EDITING TECHNIQUES

**Associative Editing:** splicing of two scenes in succession with similar-shaped images.

**Rule of Thirds:** when a cut occurs, smoother if focus of attention is in same third.

**Flashback and Flashforward:** dissolves may introduce this.

- back: gives visual presence to a past event
- forward: flash to the future

**Visual Simile and Metaphor:** one image represents another, edited visual comment on a subject made by intercutting it with a scene of another

**Parallel Editing/Cross-cutting:** different locations, different action - interrelated, cutting to parallel action, to build tension.

**Cutaways:** those shots that have no visual continuity with the previous scene, but a logical continuity. May use when can't show the event • reaction shot.

**Tonal Editing:** a lighting concept in which succeeding scenes are gradually lightened or darkened to correspond to an improving or deteriorating situation in the story.

### Montage

A technique that composes shots associated by subject or theme in a way that conveys mood and ideas.

**American:** series of short shots that as a whole convey a single, unified meaning.

- connotes a long passage of time, cataclysmic events
- Narrative Montage: recounts an event in a minute, consolidates. Musicals, War Films.
- to establish a particular mood or to condense a long and complicated action.
- form a poetic impression or passage of time

**Russian:** portray events of momentous importance rather than as fill-in for short episodes. ie., battles

- shot takes its meaning from the context in which it is placed
- emotional and intellectual impact of a film grows out of placement of shots
- visual conflict between and among shots

Sergei Eisenstein

**"Collision of images":** by blatantly and obviously cutting one shot to another, believed that an entirely new meaning could be created through the editing, a meaning not contained in either shot alone but produced exclusively by their juxtaposition. Editing need not always be focused on maintaining continuity. A cut could be made for metaphoric purposes. Today: **commercials**.

V.I. Pudovkin

### Linkage:

Scenes of a film have no intrinsic meaning until put together - cumulative meaning.

Theory based on "relational editing": a process that emphasized the different relationships that could be established among a series of shots thru contrast, similarity, symbolism or repetition. A scene could be constructed simply by adding significant detail to significant detail and that this kind of "linkage" could be done unobtrusively, masked by the logic of the editing and the power of the drama.

**Pudovkin:** " *The foundation of film art is editing* "

Europeans use the term montage as Americans use the term editing.

French: any cutting of the film = editing

**Other Editing Techniques:** for retention the eye needs 3 to 4 frames of film footage.

- do not cut away from most interesting shot in the scene until it is fully exploited
- don't be afraid to use takes of long duration, have their own internal tensions
- you may not want to break up the continuity of a single action
- can habitually cut in the middle of a physical action with succeeding shots continuing the direction of movement. Will give a "kick" of added energy.
- the viewer follows the tail of a movement, compulsively drawn along its direction. Editors can "cheat" when succeeding shots do not match perfectly.
- what is *not seen* can be as powerful as what is seen, viewer will fill in space beyond the frame with imagination

## CUTS

**Editor's Cut:** rough composition of how film will be laid out, reasonable if its is 15% longer than the final cut. Includes all scenes and dialogue that were shown. "European Cut"

**Director's Cut:** fine cutting, SFX, music, dubbing added. By terms guaranteed by Director's Guild, have legal right to this cut, his/her vision as complete.

**Final Cut:** approved by producers, may or may not be director's choice.

## Linear Editing

Film Viewers: moviola, upright, motor-driven, older version, beauty is in its simplicity.

- physical control over variable speeds
- editor physically handles film
- with film viewer, keeps editor "close to film"
- can use 2 viewers, 1 for shot cutting from, 1 for shot going to

Flat-Bed Editing Decks: most popular are **KEM AND STEENBECK**, faster and can activate many reels at once.

- can quickly view various segments of footage at once
- may use to locate footage if not primarily used for editing

**Nonlinear Editing:** computer editing

- allows for speed and random access to material
- can jump immediately to any point in the film material
- editor can freely insert and pull out frames of a take, move them around quickly
- transfer dailies and editor's versions of cuts on video to reference

## Approaching the Material

**Deductive approach:** have a solid overview, strong sense of the script, commit to a faithful allegiance of the story and its characters.

**Inductive approach:** know the script but look at the footage constantly, notice what is most interesting and what has worked best.

All narratives have a beginning, middle and end